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ABSTRACT

This booklet is one of eight developed both as resource guides to assist Wisconsin public schools in offering quality reading instruction and as models for improvement where there is a need for change. This first booklet is an overview of the Right to Read effort at the national, state, and local levels. In addition to background material, it explains the two concepts that frequently guide Right to Read activities--the umbrella concept and the multiplier effect. Strategies for both state and local education agencies are presented, along with a suggested model flow chart. (AEA)

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Wisconsin
Handbook for Reading Improvement

Section A- The National, State & Local Right to Read Effort

developed by
Wisconsin Right to Read Effort

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
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FOREWORD

The ability to read assumes added dimensions and relevance in a constantly changing world. There is increased national and state emphasis on improved reading instruction in public schools in response to changing needs. To equip learners to function effectively as adults in this climate of change, educators are charged with the complex task of offering instruction which will permit all learners to read to the limit of their potential.

The materials in this handbook are presented for two reasons: (1) to provide resources which will assist Wisconsin public schools to continue to offer high quality reading instruction, and (2) to provide a model for improvement where the need for change has become evident. The concepts and activities presented are representative of methods and approaches which hopefully will lead to a keener understanding and full-scale implementation of the components of an effective K-12 reading program.

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Chief, Reading Section

Wisconsin Handbook for Reading Improvement

Section A- The National, State & Local Right to Read Effort
Section B- Right to Read & the Community
Section C- Advisory Councils
Section D- Publicity & Public Relations
Section E- Assessment
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Bulletin No. 8556

THE NATIONAL, STATE AND LOCAL RIGHT TO READ EFFORT

BACKGROUND

The National Right to Read Effort emerged in response to a decade of educational queries, assessments, and concerns regarding the reading achievement of American citizens. Throughout the 1960's, national studies and regional surveys underscored the severity of the problem and provided ideas as to the reasons for the condition.

Several conferences and national task forces were organized to discuss the state of the art in reading and to outline possible future directions. One such conference, coordinated by Dr. Empress Y. Zedler in 1967, was to report on the "Problems of Dyslexia and Related Disorders in Public Schools of the United States". The conclusion which came from this conference was that there was relatively little known concerning reading disorders in general. Among the recommendations was the request for the appointment of a commission to further study the problem.

Consequently, a national advisory committee was appointed and in 1969 their summary report, "Reading Disorders in the United States" was presented to Robert Finch, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. This report gave statistics which reinforced the previous data as to the gravity and intensity of the reading crisis in American education.

Right to Read Begins

With startling data such as:

. . .one out of every four elementary students needs special reading assistance;

. . .of the 700,000 students who drop out of school annually, the majority are reading two or more years below ability;

. . .the Harris Poll identified 18.5 million adults (16 years of age or older) as functional illiterates;

the National Right to Read Effort was spawned.

The development of a national reading effort was conceptualized in 1969 by former U.S. Commissioner of Education, Dr. James E. Allen, Jr., as a realistic response to the well documented reading problem. In his September 23, 1969 speech to the Association of State Boards of Education, Dr. Allen cited various statistics synthesizing the reading deficiencies throughout the United States, presenting, in summary, a challenge for the next decade.

". . . Those who do not gain the ability to read in the course of their early education lack a skill necessary to all other areas of learning and are being denied a fundamental educational right—the right to read . . . Therefore, I am herewith proclaiming my belief that we should immediately set for ourselves the goal of assuring that by the end of the 1970's the right to read shall be a reality for all . . . and . . . I am calling for a total national commitment to and involvement in the achievement of the 'right to read' goal."

Thus, the ambitious goal of Right to Read, universal literacy for all able Americans, was formulated.

Right to Read—Target for the 70's

The goal for the National Right to Read Effort is to increase functional literacy so that by 1980, 90% of the population 16 years of age and older and 99% of those under 16 years of age would possess the reading skills and competencies essential for an effective and productive life. In order to reach this goal, Right to Read was designed as a coordinated endeavor of all segments of society, public and private, professional and nonprofessional.

The concept of Right to Read embraces a dynamic, philosophical campaign encouraging nation-wide interest, commitment and positive involvement of all facets of society to prevent, correct and thereby eradicate illiteracy. This concept means that Right to Read is a catalyst, a systematic planning process, and an "umbrella effect" which enlists, stimulates, and attempts to facilitate the cooperative efforts of all to join forces in bringing to every citizen the skill and joy of being able to read.

Therefore, it is apparent that Right to Read is not a "program" as the accepted connotation of the word generally applies to federally funded initiatives. Rather, it is a philosophy emcompassing many specific and interrelated integral aspects.

The plan for the National Right to Read Effort is based upon certain basic assumptions. They are:

1. Most individuals can learn to read. (The exception to this statement is the approximately 1% of the population considered uneducable.) Therefore, all individuals in a democratic society should be provided the opportunity for literacy.

2. Each citizen is a unique person functioning at his/her own rate of growth and affected by experiential characteristics. Therefore, all educational institutions should

share the responsibility for planning individualized educational experiences, diversifying approaches, methods, and materials to accommodate student needs.

3. Since reading is an integral aspect of learning, reading instruction should be offered as a continuous process. Much research has been done, but there is a need for effective translation of this research into classroom practice at all levels of education. Therefore, procedures in curriculum planning for reading improvement should be met through demonstrated staff development activities.

4. At all levels of learning, educators must recognize the contributory role of each citizen in the reading process. The necessary academic knowledge exists to solve the reading crisis. Therefore, all sectors of society should be encouraged to participate and marshall resources in a united attempt to combat illiteracy.

A principle of Right to Read is that the necessary academic knowledge, human capability and technological resources are available to solve the literacy crisis in America. These resources must first be identified and united. To assist in mobilizing resources, the Right to Read Effort has funded three types of programs: National Impact Programs, Demonstration Programs and State Education Agencies. Through these efforts, various processes, products, and promising practices are identified with an emphasis on total coordination and dissemination of information.

Systematic Planning—An Important Aspect of Right to Read

At the heart of the Right to Read Effort is a systematic planning process implemented at the national, state and local levels. This process encourages a reassessment of prevailing strategies, exploration of possible alternatives and uses of human and financial resources to produce practical and tangible results. With careful planning, resources in the community, state and nation can be identified and mobilized.

Right to Read planning produces an "umbrella effort" by transforming splintered efforts and diversified agencies into networks. Energetic, dedicated, creative people in government, professions, organizations, schools, communities and private homes work together to achieve a mutually respected goal. Planning at all levels organizes individuals and organizations with separate ideas and resources that bring about educational change.

The National Strategy

The strategy for the National Right to Read Effort stems from the belief that the ability to read and use other literacy skills is required for people to function effectively in society. Given the fundamental assumptions on which the effort is based and the extent of the problem to be overcome, no one single program can be viewed as having potential for success everywhere. A comprehensive strategy, holding promise for meeting the national goal, was therefore outlined by the Right to Read Office.

Rationale

Several factors supported the need for a comprehensive strategy.

- -The diverse backgrounds and needs of the pluralistic society in America created pressures for a greater variety of possible solutions.
- -Little literature was available in the field of reading to support the user of one particular reading program for a specific target group.
- -Difficulties in addressing the broad target population were compounded by the many uncoordinated programs operating at federal, state and local levels.
- -The number of unrelated public and private efforts also hindered attempts to set up one massive program to eliminate illiteracy.

For these and other reasons, the National Right to Read Office sought to devise a broad, comprehensive and multifaceted strategy through which all available resources could be brought to bear on the problem. The comprehensive plan is best illustrated through the use of the Right to Read Strategy Process Model on the next page.

TWO KEY RIGHT TO READ CONCEPTS

Two concepts that frequently guide Right to Read activities are the umbrella concept and the multiplier effect.

1. **Umbrella concept** - In implementing Right to Read strategy, a total involvement of people in all walks of life is required to set up the interaction necessary to correct existing literacy programs and prevent further ones. The umbrella concept ties in the contributions of business and industry, the volunteer efforts of the private sector and the programmatic efforts of professionals and nonprofessionals.

2. **Multiplier effect** - No more significant concept than the multiplier effect can be noted in understanding the intent and thrust of Right to Read activities. Through the efficient use of resources at all levels, people will have an investment in Right to Read which will remain durable and multiply support for the program.

Grant programs often use new resources to develop and implement activities. They achieve a short-range set of objectives and then are often phased out as funds are lost. Very few grant programs have long-range objectives or goals that serve as the focus of their entire effort. They generally count on whatever change has been started to continue as long as the initiating resources continue, even though most programs hope for long-range effects.

Right to Read differs from these short-range objective-based programs. It has a long-range goal, it depends and acts directly on people to achieve this goal with only small resource allocations, and it plans to have its program continued at the same level of intensity once all federal funds have been withdrawn.

Many educators wonder if the goal of eliminating illiteracy by 1980 can be achieved with the current level of funding that Right to Read has available. Part of the response lies in more effective use of resources through the multiplier effect. This effect has several dimensions within the total Right to Read program.

1. Right to Read is conceived of as a program in which all members of society have responsibility to help eliminate

illiteracy. These members are invited to help share in the Right to Read Effort.

2. Resources are not used to buy one-shot services. Instead, resources are used to train people and provide materials and services in order to have the most pervasive effect in achieving Right to Read objectives. The multiplier effect is enhanced, then, by using resources on those Right to Read activities which provide for the greatest possible transmission of knowledge and skills from the highest to the lowest levels of the program.

THE ROLE OF THE STATE EDUCATION AGENCY

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction provides a linkage between the Office of Education and local education agencies. The U.S. Office of Education is authorized to provide developmental information, technical assistance, and financial support. State agencies participating in the Right to Read program enter into an Office of Education/State Education Agency Agreement to support the National Right to Read Effort through the formulation of comprehensive state plan to implement the Right to Read strategy on a statewide basis. The Right to Read Plan for Wisconsin includes objectives that provide for assessing statewide reading needs, training local Right to Read directors, offering follow-up technical assistance to them, organizing and working with a State Right to Read Advisory Council, developing materials, disseminating information about Right to Read and evaluating the effort.

THE LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY STRATEGY

The thrust of the Right to Read strategy at the national and state levels brings together the knowledge, human and financial resources, technology, organizational structures and processes to ensure that people do in fact learn literacy skills at the local level. No national program has ever placed so much emphasis on giving assistance other than money to school districts to strengthen local efforts to bring about change from within the system. Coordination of programs, people, resources and ideas is an undergirding theme of Right to Read. Just as this umbrella concept is a viable construct at the national and state levels, so also is it implicit in the way Right to Read operates at the local level. Joint planning, team efforts, sharing ideas and resources, working with professional groups and the private sector are all exciting ways to view the local effort as it functions under the Right to Read umbrella.

The local education agency strategy for building a reading program that assures success to every student and adult must be comprehensive in nature. It must provide a vehicle for involving all segments of the school and community and a focus that inspires cooperation. This strategy has three major components:

I. Selecting Key Personnel
II. Amassing Commitment and Support
III. Utilizing a Program-Building Process

I. Selecting Key Personnel

The local education agency strategy is built around the functioning of a local Right to Read director and a Right to Read Advisory Council.

Local Right to Read Director: The person who directs the local effort plays a key role in Right to Read strategy. The role is that of leader and change agent. As a leader, the local Right to Read director is involved in planning, organizing, managing, communicating, and evaluating. The planning function involves charting a series of activities to achieve specified goals. Organizing implies that a structure is provided to facilitate the achievement of goals and guide day-to-day operations. Managing suggests that activities are conducted according to plan with economy, efficiency, and resourcefulness. Communicating implies a two-way information flow between and among school and community groups to keep everyone informed about the progress of Right to Read activities. The evaluation function includes monitoring the achievement of objectives and activities as well as measuring the change that occurs. Change might be in program development or in attitude or performance of faculty, students, or community members.

In the change agent role, the local Right to Read director performs at least three additional functions as a catalyst, problem solver, and process assistant. He/she is needed as catalyst to "undo" complacency, disturb the status quo and free the energies and creative efforts of everyone in the school and community to work together toward a higher level of achievement and productivity. The problem-solving function involves tasks such as analyzing situations, offering suggestions, acquiring resources, recommending solutions and bringing about innovations. As process assistant, the local Right to Read director guides groups through the steps in the change process and provides for staff development in literacy.

The dual role of leader and change agent played by the local Right to Read director requires knowledge of literacy program development. Beyond that, he/she needs expertise in the areas of leadership, communications and change agent processes. Therefore, much of the program to train local Right to Read directors is focused on these skills and processes. It is important to understand the relationship between the role of the local Right to Read director and the inclusion in the training program of leadership skill development, communications and community involvement. It is a departure from the traditional preparatory program for directors of reading services, but closely related to the skills directors will need to bring educational services and community together to assure that all will be literate.

From the description given above, it can be inferred that the local Right to Read director assumes a role somewhat different from the typical reading specialist in a school system. Emphasis is placed on building well articulated, coordinated, school/community-based literacy programs that eliminate failure in contrast with more traditional programs that provide remedial/corrective-type services. The commitment and support of everyone are needed to prevent reading failure and assure success in day-to-day literacy tasks. At the same time corrective services must be provided for those who have already failed, in order to bring them back into the mainstream.

Local Right to Read Advisory Council

The Advisory Council is the group that assists the local Right to Read director and other personnel in becoming aware of the goals and needs of the community in relation to literacy and in amassing support for the program that is developed. It should be made up of approximately ten to fifteen persons who are representative of a variety of socio-economic levels, educational programs and professional and vocational interests. The Council should express the broad base of concerns and interests of the community. Its meetings provide a vehicle for bringing educational institutions and the community together in a shared effort to improve literacy and, thereby, the quality of community life.

The Advisory Council's effectiveness depends on the tasks it undertakes, the perceived relevance of those tasks to the goal of literacy and the commitment generated among the members. Any group that is called together expects to have a purpose and a task. It will not maintain interest if it is used as a rubber stamp for school-planned programs.

Section of the Manual offers specific strategies in establishing and working with a local Right to Read Advisory Council.

II. Amassing Commitment and Support

Initially, literacy must be established as a top priority. The Right to Read Effort needs the commitment and support of the administrators and staff in the agency sponsoring a local Right to Read program. The organization's commitment to improvement is necessary if any meaningful new ideas are to be implemented. Persons in administrative positions in the sponsoring agency possess formal and personal power. They also control policy and the allocation of resources. All of these factors influence whether or not meaningful change can take place.

Sections , , and of the Manual all suggest ways in which Right to Read can obtain commitment and support at the local level.

III. Utilizing the Right to Read Process

The National Right to Read Office formulated a planning and implementation process that includes these phases:

A. Goal setting
B. Needs and resources assessment
C. Program planning
D. Staff development/implementation
E. Evaluation/dissemination

The following sections briefly describe these elements of the local Right to Read strategy. More detailed suggestions and procedures can be found in

A. *Goal Setting* - To begin the process of solving the literacy problem, the school/community must set some attainable goals and determine a priority order for working to achieve them. Wisconsin Criteria of Excellence for Quality K-12 Reading Program Development can serve as a resource for the selection of goals. The Criteria of Excellence follows on the next pages.

B. *Needs and Resources Assessment* - After basic goals have been established, an inventory of existing school/community needs and resources should be taken. This will provide information from which planning decisions can be made. For more specific information on reading program needs assessment and planning activities refer to the publication, "The Wisconsin Reading Program Assessment and Planning Handbook".

C. *Program Planning* - Writing a plan to meet the observed needs and achieve the desired goals through the use of existing resources is the truly creative part of the Right to Read process. Specific steps are laid out to guide the process and focus it on goal attainment. Groups tend to work more efficiently and effectively when some underlying structure keeps them moving along. Program planning carefully delineates the steps required to move from a need to a goal.

D. *Staff Development/Implementation* - When the plan is completed, its implementation will depend to a great extent upon the quality of the staff development activities offered to those responsible for putting it into effect. The staff development aspect of the process is an investment in the future. Administrators, staff, and community members involved in the literacy effort will all need inservice education in Right to Read.

E. *Evaluation/Dissemination* - As soon as the plan has begun to be implemented the evaluation process begins. Movement through the process itself is monitored. In addition, actions taken and products of work done are documented.

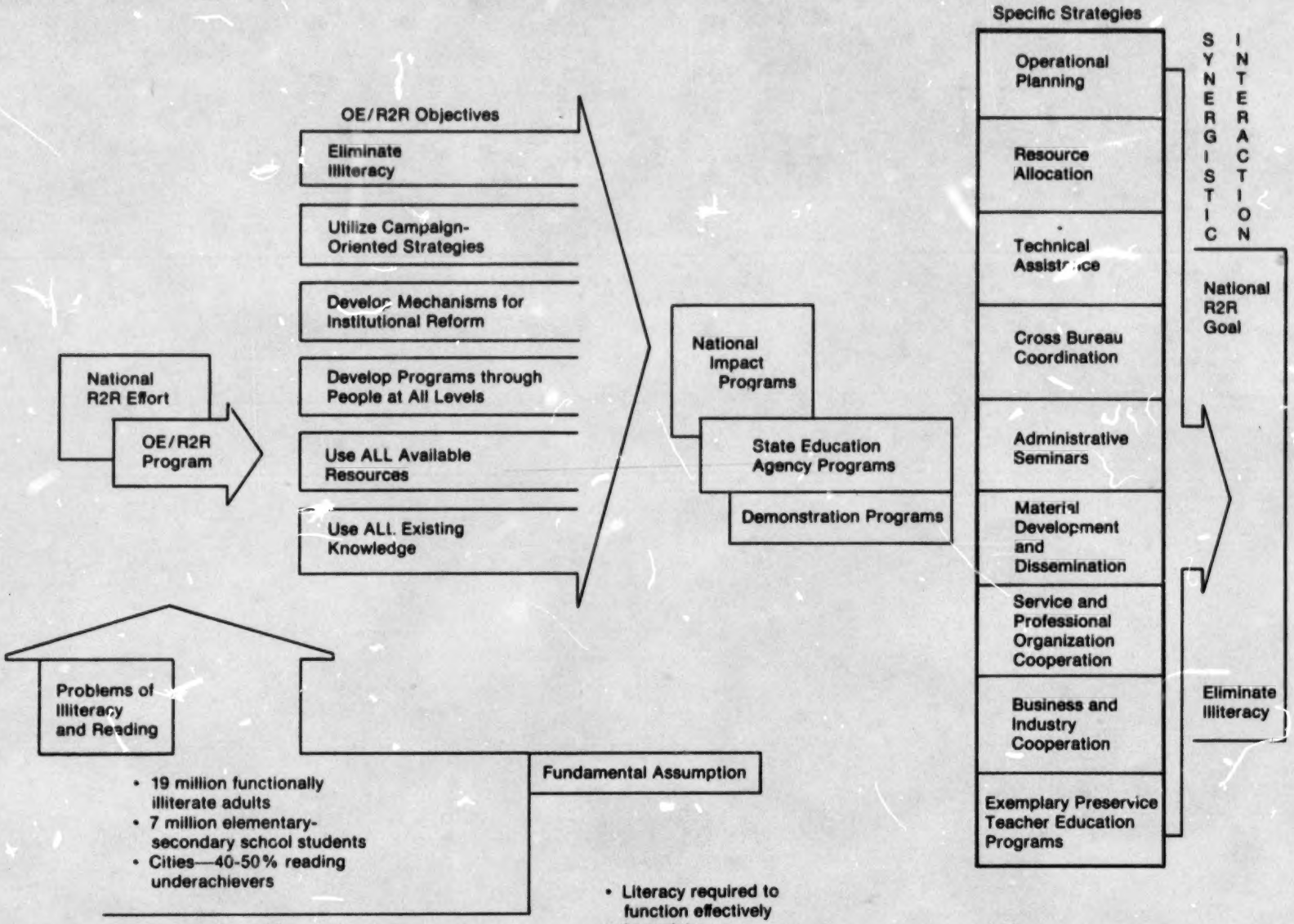
   The purpose of evaluation is to determine what is good so that it may be institutionalized and disseminated. What is not good may be changed or dropped. Evaluation keeps the planning and implementation process alive by providing continual feedback for decision-making.

   Successful practices with sufficient evidence and documentation to support their adaptation in other settings can be disseminated to other appropriate sites. The process of evaluation is one aid in determining which programs have the potential to serve as models.

SUMMARY

This Section has provided you with an overview of the Right to Read Effort at the national, state and local levels. The rest of the Handbook will expand upon the introductory comments made here, offering strategies and processes to follow in developing a local Right to Read Effort.

RIGHT TO READ STRATEGY PROCESS MODEL



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